

Water Right Section Update – Ron Ellis

- **Brazos River Authority System Operations Permit:**

Applicant submitted water management plan, staff completed technical review of the plan and the new draft permit and technical memos were mailed August 18, 2014 to the applicant. The application has returned to the State Office of Administrative Hearings (SOAH). The evidentiary hearing is expected to resume February 2015.

- **Lower Bois'Arc Creek Reservoir:**

Major reservoir application in Fannin County. Staff revised the draft permit and revised technical memos on September 5, 2014 and the application will go before the Commission on September 24th to consider hearing requests and determine whether to refer the application to SOAH.

- **New Team:**

Due to the drought and drought response, the number of pending change of ownership applications has exploded. Also drought response has brought new focus and emphasis to water use reporting. Because of this, the new team was created to address those program needs and issues and will focus on changes of ownership, water use reporting and the water rights database. Those functions are currently part of the permitting team.

A new team leader will be hired in the coming weeks.

Because of the extension outreach efforts over the last three years, the new team has begun mailing notices of violation (NOV) to those water right holders who have not submitted their 2013 water use reports. The reports were due March 1, 2014. 25 NOVs were mailed on August 29, 2014 with a response due by the end of September. NOVs will be mailed to non-reporters on a continual basis.

Water use data is important so if any water right holders have questions on how to report, if you reported, or if you are not receiving your water use report, please contact staff so that we can help you comply, rather than proceeding with enforcement.

- **Personnel Changes:**

Stephen Densmore, Hydrology Team Leader, retired after 10 years at TCEQ

- **New Staff:**

Zach Riggs – Water Rights Compliance Assurance Team

Jade Rutledge – Resource Protection Team

Watermaster Update – Amy Settemeyer

- For the current watermaster programs in the Rio Grande, South Texas, and Concho staff is presenting the FY2015 budget to the Commissioners tomorrow at agenda. Pending approval, billing will be sent October or early November.
- Evaluations were recently concluded for the Sabine and Neches River Basins and the Neches – Trinity Coastal Basin. At the August 20, 2014 agenda staff recommended that the Commission not move forward with appointing a watermaster in those basins. Those findings will be included in the biennial report to the legislature this year.
- Personnel change:
The Rio Grande Watermaster position is vacant and the position will be posted for the Harlingen regional office soon.
- Brazos Watermaster program implementation is currently ongoing. Several items will need to be addressed before implementation is complete. The team leader position is currently posted, “open until filled”.
Stakeholder meetings will be scheduled for this fall and letters/notices will be mailed to water right holders and interested parties as soon as the meetings are scheduled.
- A Brazos watermaster webpage will be available soon. If you would like to be notified when the webpage is available, please e-mail Watermaster@tceq.texas.gov.

Commission Actions Update – Ruth Takeda

- June 4, 2014 the Commission extended LCRAs February 27th emergency order to July 25, 2014. The extension order allows LCRA to suspend all releases of stored water to the irrigators except for Garwood Irrigation Company under its contract.
- August 6, 2014 the Commission issued another LCRA order suspending releases to the irrigators except for Garwood Irrigation Company under its contract until October 25, 2014.
- August 6th the Commission also amended and adopted the Texas Administrative Code §295 rules for interbasin transfers which took out the language that an application has to show “the effect on user rates and fees on each class of rate payer” because this requirement was deleted from the statute.
- August 15, 2014 a Commission work session was held concerning the Brazos watermaster. The goal is to have the watermaster program up and running within 12 to 18 months.

Closing – Sonia Crawford

Next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday December 9, 2014 at 10:00am.

Comments and topics for discussion can be emailed to Sarah Henderson or Sonia Crawford.